

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD ON JANUARY 26, 1916.

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The fourth meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1916, was held in their office at 1729 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, January 26, 1916. The following members were present:

Charles Moore, the Chairman;
Frederick Law Olmsted;
Thomas Hastings;
Cass Gilbert;
Edwin H. Blashfield;
Peirce Anderson;
Herbert Adams;

also Colonel W. W. Harts, United States Army, the Secretary and Executive Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. and proceeded at once to the business before it.

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.- The minutes of the preceding meeting held on December 4 and 5, 1915, were presented and approved.

2. PLANS FOR THE PROPOSED CENTRAL HEATING, LIGHTING AND POWER PLANT.- Colonel Harts laid before the Commission blueprints of elevations, plans and sections prepared in the office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department for a new central heating, lighting and power plant to be located on the Washington Channel at the foot of 14th street, which had been submitted by the Secretary of the Treasury "for such comment as the Commission may desire to make thereon." Colonel Harts explained that this submission had been received on January 17th and that the Chairman had immediately referred the matter for preliminary report to the committee composed of Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Hastings, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Blashfield, that this committee had rendered its report (attached hereto as exhibit A) and had urged the calling of a special meeting at the earliest possible moment. The report of the committee was read and accepted. Mr. Gilbert then went into the result of his preliminary investigation of the whole situation at some length.

At 10:30 Mr. Louis A. Simon, superintendent of the drafting division, and Mr. N.S. Thompson of the Division of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, both representing

Mr. Gilbert and the Chairman were further authorized to incur any traveling expenses they might find necessary in the performance of their official duties on this committee.

the Supervising Architect's Office of the Treasury Department, appeared before the Commission for a discussion of the plans submitted. The report of the sub-committee of which Mr. Gilbert was chairman, the notes of the above conference and the formal report of the Commission to the Treasury Department in the matter are attached hereto under exhibits A, B, and C. Mr. Gilbert and the Chairman were appointed to prepare the report, and Mr. Cammerer was directed to bring all available data to New York for Mr. Gilbert's information and assistance in its preparation. ★

3. LIGHT STANDARDS FOR THE PINEY BRANCH BRIDGE.- The Secretary next laid before the Commission a letter from the Commissioners of the District of Columbia dated December 14, 1915, going into the history of light standards on the Piney Branch Bridge and ~~concluding~~ concluding with the request for the advice of the Commission as to what change, if any, should be made in the system of lighting the structure. The Commission, after viewing the various exhibits submitted, felt that the arch of the bridge, the locations and size of the original lamp posts, as well as the size and elevation of the tigers at the ends of the bridge and their location with reference to the original lamp posts, all bore a harmonious relation which evidently had been worked out with considerable care and skill by the designers. They advised, therefore, that the replacement of the original posts with others of different design would disturb the appearance of the structure, and suggested that the original lights be restored. This was practically a reaffirmation of a similar letter of April 7, 1914, to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia regarding the question of replacing the original lamp posts on this bridge with others. (See reply under exhibit D.).

4. HEIGHTS OF BUILDINGS.- The next matter taken under consideration was a letter from the Board of Commissioners of the District of Columbia stating that they feel that there exists a necessity for a change in the existing law relating to the height of private buildings in the city of Washington, and asking the Commission to give consideration to the subject and advise them of their views with reference thereto. A conference on the question had been arranged with the District Commissioners, and Colonel Kutz and

Commissioner Brownlow, accompanied by Inspector of Buildings Morris Hacker, lunched with the Commission. During the luncheon and for a short while thereafter the question was discussed extensively. The preparation of the formal reply to be made was left in the hands of the committee composed of Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Anderson and is attached hereto as Exhibit E.

5. FRANCIS ASBURY MEMORIAL.- The Francis Asbury Centenary Association, representing various branches of American Methodism, proposes to erect in the city of Washington a statue in bronze on horseback of Francis Asbury, a famous circuit rider in the early history of this country. Bishop Earl Cranston and H. K. Carroll, Chairman and Secretary of the Executive Committee of this association, respectively, accompanied by Augustus Lukeman, the sculptor chosen for the execution of the work, and Evarts Tracy, the architectural adviser to their Association in this matter, appeared before the Commission at 2:30 o'clock per appointment. They brought along a preliminary design of the statue. Bishop Cranston informed the Commission that the Committee, accompanied by their sculptor and architectural adviser, had made a canvas of what appeared available sites in the city, and had selected a location on the Government reservation at the intersection of Columbia Road and Sixteenth street as being a desirable site from their point of view. Upon inquiry as to whether there was a possibility of their adopting some other form than the equestrian type of monument, or a form of memorial in which the equestrian design contemplated could be embodied, the Commission was informed that unfortunately their Committee had to depend for the means for erecting the memorial upon popular subscription of thousands of men and women who had long ago been asked to contribute to a bronze statue, and that these would feel that their money had been misapplied if the promised form of an equestrian statue was not executed. The Committee then was excused. The preparation of the reply was entrusted to a committee composed of Mr. Adams and Mr. Blashfield. The reply is shown by Exhibit F.

6. BUCHANAN MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN.- Mr. Lawrason Riggs of Baltimore, Maryland, executor under the will of Harriett Lane Johnston, accompanied by Mr. Hans Schuler, sculptor, and Mr. Beecher and Mr. Wyatt, architects, appeared before the Commission at 3 o'clock with a small model and sketch drawings of the proposed memorial to President

James Buchanan to be erected in Meridian Hill Park. This model recognized criticisms made by the Commission regarding former models submitted, but they pointed out a number of further desirable modifications in the present model which were discussed with these gentlemen and understood to be agreeable to them. These modifications are outlined in the letter written Mr. Riggs, attached hereto, as Exhibit *A*.

7. TREATMENT OF GROUNDS SURROUNDING LINCOLN MEMORIAL. - Mr. Henry Bacon and Mr. Clarence Howard consulted with the Commission during the afternoon regarding the landscape treatment of the area surrounding the Lincoln Memorial, and brought with them a number of sketches showing studies of possible treatments for consideration of the Commission. The matter was discussed at some length. Upon motion Mr. Howard was asked to prepare two series of studies for the immediate vicinity of the Lincoln Memorial:- one based on the general rectangular form within the inclosing trees - the other on the circular form having in mind especially the adjustment of that circular form to the memorial, in particular the terrace.

8. THE COMMITTEE ON COMPETITIONS.- The Committee appointed to prepare a report to be made to the War Department on a simple method of competitions, of which Mr. Olmsted is chairman, reported progress.

9. MONTROSE PARK.- Colonel Harts also laid before the Commission a plan showing the landscape treatment proposed for Montrose Park, and which had been studied along lines suggested by Mr. Olmsted who, as a committee, had gone over the ground on a previous occasion. Mr. Olmsted, as the committee, signified his approval of the plan as shown, stating, however, that he would have no opportunity to check it up with actual conditions on the ground. (See P.B. & G. file No. 32429)

10. BRIDLE PATHS IN PORTION OF WEST POTOMAC PARK IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF NORTH B STREET.- Colonel Harts also requested the advice of the Commission as to the desirability of running a bridle path among the trees in the area of ground lying between 17th street and the Potomac and immediately north of North B street, and submitted a plan (P.B. & G. No. *32429*) on which the proposed line of such a path had been indicated. The Commission felt that such a feature would be a fine thing.

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11. SIDEWALKS ALONG WEST POTOMAC PARK SIDE OF NORTH B STREET.- Colonel Harts ²⁴³

further asked the opinion of the Commission regarding the advisability of placing sidewalks along the Park side of North B street, between 17th street and the river.

The Commission advised that they be constructed. (See P.B. & G. plan No. — ¹⁰⁰⁰₁₀₀₁)

There being no further business to come before the meeting, the Commission adjourned at 6 p.m., subject to the call of the chairman.

W. H. Harts

COLONEL, U. S. ARMY

Secretary of the Commission

Charles Moore

Chairman

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SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT TO FINE ARTS
MEETING JANUARY 26, 1916.

349

MEMORANDUM

IN RELATION TO

CENTRAL HEATING, LIGHTING & POWER PLANT

WASHINGTON, D. C.

January 24, 1916.

The sub-committee of the Commission of Fine Arts to which this matter has been referred for preliminary consideration submit the following memorandum.

The blueprints of the working drawings for the proposed Central Heating, Lighting & Power Plant to be located on the site at 13th and Water Streets at the head of the Washington Channel, Washington, D.C., numbered respectively H-1 to H-17 inclusive and A-5 and the maps relative to this location have been studied as carefully as the limited time at the disposal of the sub-committee would permit.

The proposed building consists of a principal structure designed to contain eight boilers, six of which are apparently to be installed at the present time. The exterior dimensions of the said building are as follows: 178' 8" long; 126' 6" wide; 80' high above the river. The main line of building 90 feet to ~~the~~ highest point of the building exclusive of the stacks. There will be four stacks each of the diameter of about sixteen feet, the exterior rising to a total ~~sixty~~ height of 195 * feet above the river. It is understood that the base line of the building is placed at the grade of 7. The drawings include a building to be constructed of tapestry brick trimmed with stone. The exterior design is of the usual power plant type.

The plant is designed to receive coal from a spur track from the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad. The coal to be dropped from the cars into hoppers, there to be crushed and thence lifted within a tower by conveyors to hoppers above the boilers, providing an overhead feed for the boilers.

The boilers are placed at the second story level so that the grates are about

*Chimneys are 188' high from ground, plus 7 ft. to the river, or 195 above river.

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The boilers are placed at the second story level so that the grates are about 188' high from ground, plus 7 ft. to the river, or 195' above river.

A

18 feet above the ground. The ashes are received from the boilers to hoppers and conveyed to an overhead ash bunker and presumably removed by dumping into the cars on the spur track. There appears to be no provision made at present for taking coal from water transportation or removing ashes by water route.

In connection with the boiler plant is a large engine room apparently adapted to steam turbines located at the level of the second story or about 18 feet above grade, being at the level of the boiler firing floor. This engine room is 42' 7" from floor to under chord of the trusses over it, and to the soffit of the ceiling at the highest part 53' 7" feet from the floor. A room of impressive height but it is not apparent to the sub-committee that such height is necessary for the working of the plant.

This building is located at a position which will make it highly conspicuous from the most important points in Washington. Viewed from the National Capitol it will be one of the most prominent objects in the city. From Arlington, from the White House, from Potomac Park, from the Mall and from the approach by the way of the Potomac, from the War College, and in fact from every point of view, a more conspicuous site could hardly have been selected. Its proximity to the Washington Monument would seriously impair the dignity of that structure and the vast scale of the chimney stacks will cause a change of the entire aspect of that section of Washington.

It is understood that the prevailing winds in Washington are from the southeast and south and this being so any smoke or gases from this ~~xxx~~ plant will be distributed over areas in the immediate vicinity upon which are placed the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum, the White House conservatories and gardens, the tree growths of the Mall and other valuable properties upon which the Government has expended great care and vast sums of money. The objectionable gases and smoke would doubtless be eliminated as far as possible, but the form of the plant suggests that consideration of monetary economy have weighed with the designers as they ordinarily would in a mechanical plant of this character rather than with regard to the special requirements of Washington as a Capital City.

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(Report of Sub-committee of Commission of Fine Arts at meeting, Jan.26,1916-

The sub-committee believe that this plant even located in the same place could
made less conspicuous and objectionable.

(Report of Sub-committee of Commission of Fine Arts at meeting, Jan. 26, 1916 -
Reference. See also stenographic report of inquiry made of Mr. Thompson and Mr.
Monks of Treasury Department - at meeting of Commission.)

January 26, 1916.

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In Re. Heating, Lighting and Power Plant.

Mr. Gilbert: Now we want to know about the plans that were prepared; we want to know how to get rid of the stacks. Mr. Thompson is a mechanical engineer —he will be the best man to tell us about that.

Mr. Thompson: We would put in an induced draft system. The induced draft apparatus will cost fifty per cent more than the stacks. It will be a bad engineering proposition. Nature will do the work cheaper, and I don't see any use in doing something nature will do without cost.

Mr. Gilbert: I would like to ask Mr. Thompson what stack it is proposed to use.

Mr. Thompson: It is proposed to use the Custodis stack, Mr. Gilbert; a big stack.

Mr. Gilbert: Who is the architect?

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Beresford is the architectural draftsman. Also Mr. Morris in an advisory capacity.

Mr. Gilbert: What Morris?

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Charles Morris. Mr. Morris is an employe of the Supervising Architect's office.

Mr. Simons: I don't think that quite expresses the situation. The former supervising architect had a separate set of men to design this building and the architectural part of it received his direct supervision and it was so separate from the rest of the office that even he feels it was kept separate.

Mr. Gilbert: Did you say the architects designed the steel stacks?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, with Mr. Stilwell, who has had charge of the engineering end of it.

The stacks are cased with great big girders running up on the outside to give an architectural effect, for some reason. That was a bad thing from an engineering standpoint. Take a hundred mile wind on a round stack with no obstructions and we

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figure that the net pressure is fifty pounds per square inch. Take the same stack with casings sticking out on it and the pressure will be a good deal more.

Mr. Gilbert: What is the custodis stack?

Mr. Thompson: It is an ordinary stack with perforated steel frame. It is used at the Port Morris station outside of New York and it is used at the 21st street station.

Mr. Gilbert: What does it cost?

Mr. Thompson: Four Custodis stacks cost twenty four thousand dollars.

Mr. Gilbert: That is, twenty four thousand dollars for the four.

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: From the foundation?

Mr. Thompson: From the foundation we carry the stack up to thirteen feet of the building line. Carry the steel tower up to the level of the roof and then the stack is put right on.

Mr. Gilbert: Now do you know what the Custodis stacks will weigh? I am asking these questions because we can get then very nearly the reason for having these stacks. Do you know what the Custodis stacks will weigh?

Mr. Thompson: Yes. The Custodis stack in this particular case I think will run pretty close to three hundred and fifty tons, each stack, which approximates closely as I recall the weight of the steel stacks specified or shown. This would not increase our steel tower foundation by reason of change in steel from brick.

Mr. Gilbert: The Custodis feature of it begins at the level of the roof?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, and take the brick stack. We would have to increase this steel tower.

Mr. Gilbert: Is the Custodis stack lined?

Mr. Thompson: ~~At~~ No, it is only lined with a special fire brick about forty feet above the roof where the gases are extremely heavy. The trouble with the steel stack is you have got to paint ~~ex~~ it over. The destructive gases make the steel stack depreciate very rapidly.

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Mr. Gilbert: Is there any steel reinforcement on the Custodis Stack?

Mr. Thompson: There is a little at the top. Iron bands at the top to keep it in line.

Mr. Gilbert: Have you detailed specifications of the Custodis stack to compare with the steel stack?

Mr. Thompson: Well, we have the Custodis --

Mr. Simons: May I suggest this in connection with comparison of the two stacks that it would take a very much larger stack in diameter.

Mr. Gilbert: You don't know what the Custodis people charge for royalty on this stack?

Mr. Thompson: No, I don't know. They bid for the installation and what they charge for is covered up in their price. It is much less than the steel stack. The steel stack price is thirty two thousand dollars, if I recall correctly, against twenty four thousand dollars for the Custodis stacks.

Mr. Gilbert: Are you carrying out Mr. Stilwell's ideas and specifications or are you modifying them?

Mr. Thompson: Modifying them to a great extent.

Mr. Gilbert: Why?

Mr. Thompson: Because Mr. Stilwell's plans and specifications amounted to two million dollars and the appropriation which Congress made to us was a million and a half.

Mr. Gilbert: Did you get bids for the work?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: Competitive bids?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: Is the contract let now?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: Is there any steel reinforcement on the Castoria Stack?

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Mr. Gilbert: Who has the contract?

Mr. Thompson: The W. G. Cornell Company of New York.

Mr. Gilbert: They are plumbers, they are not engineers, are they?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, they are mechanical engineers.

Mr. Gilbert: While we regard them as among the best plumbers in New York, they are ~~not~~ so well known as engineering contractors. What boilers are to be used in this plant? What we are driving at is whether these stacks are necessary and whether they should be used, and incidentally whether they should be located at that point

Mr. Thompson: Well, the location of the power plant is dictated by the ability to get coal both by rail and by water.

Mr. Gilbert: Do you propose to get coal there by water?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: Where will the coal come from?

Mr. Thompson: It will come from down the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

Mr. Gilbert: What does the coal cost coming that way, do you know?

Mr. Thompson: Well, the price at the Capitol power plant this year is about \$2.77. I suppose that for the next ten years that will be our average.

Mr. Gilbert: Soft coal.

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: Where does it come from?

Mr. Thompson: West Virginia, New River.

Mr. Gilbert: From New River. It doesn't come all the way by canal, does it?

Mr. Thompson: By way of Cumberland, coming down the canal.

Mr. Gilbert: As I understand, New River coal comes by rail, I may be wrong, I don't know. Now, as a matter of fact are there any provisions in your plans for taking coal from the water?

Mr. Thompson: Why we put on a Brown hoist and an auxiliary track and dump it on the same site where we dump it on the cars.

Mr. Gilbert: Where would the auxiliary track be?

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Mr. Thompson: The W. G. Cornell Company of New York.

Mr. Gilbert: Who has the contract?

Mr. Thompson: It would be on the east wall. Would go in on the same level as the spur tracks.

Mr. Gilbert: How high would that spur track be above the water?

Mr. Thompson: I should say about forty feet.

Mr. Gilbert: Wouldn't you as a matter of fact do it this way: Build an overhead trestle, lift the coal out of your barge and carry it at that level?

Mr. Thompson: You might do it that way. Keep your Brown hoist standing out on the end of this spur track.

Mr. Gilbert: Now, following the line of question, what I would like to ask Mr. Thompson is this: Now, would not this come within the class of those things which would not add to the beauty of the city. Is there a very heavy structure which goes out over the boats?

Mr. Thompson: Well, we would not contemplate any proposition like that.

Mr. Simons: The hopper is far below the level.

Mr. Thompson: Ninety or one hundred per cent of the coal will come in over the railroad.

Mr. Gilbert: Suppose we drop this coal business for a while. Now if you cut the stacks down and use a forced draft, your idea is that it will cost a good deal more to install and there is a constant cost of upkeep.

Mr. Thompson: The cost of operation of the stack is nothing. The cost of operation under forced draft—

Mr. Gilbert: Can you say how much?

Mr. Thompson: Not without figuring.

Mr. Gilbert: Haven't you figured that?

Mr. Thompson: No. I don't see any use in spending money to accomplish something that nature will do without cost.

Mr. Gilbert: Have you given any consideration in the plans to the possible elimination of the stacks at all. In other words, you haven't gone into the question of oil burning for instance?

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Mr. Gilbert: Why is it twenty years away?

Mr. Thompson: Just a ~~big~~ question of the price of oil.

Mr. Gilbert: Any question from an engineering standpoint?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, we would have to get oil at ninety cents a barrel to equal our present cost of coal.

Mr. Gilbert: If oil was used it would not necessitate the coal bunkers and conveyors?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, they would all come down.

Mr. Gilbert: What else would come down off the building?

Mr. Thompson: Nothing.

Mr. Gilbert: Why not? Well, let's follow out the plan again: You are putting coal into your boilers from hoppers overhead. Now you are taking ashes out from under the boilers by hoppers below. The boiler floor is fully nineteen feet above the level of Water street; in other words, you are twenty six feet above the water level, speaking roughly. You would save the entire overhead tracks and you would save the entire handling of ashes if you burned oil, and you would save not less than one-third of the gross height of the building. Now your engine room is about forty two feet from the main floor. If I understand it correctly, you expect to use steam turbines.

Mr. Thompson: We have our high tension structure on the level with the first floor and above that is our control section.

Mr. Gilbert: Any reason why that shouldn't be on the same level?

Mr. Thompson: Operating reasons.

Mr. Gilbert: What are they?

Mr. Thompson: So you can see your operating room. So you can signal from below or above just the same.

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or above just the same.

Mr. Gilbert: You have a storage battery plant there?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, just a little plant; very small capacity; only two hundred ampere hours, I believe.

Mr. Gilbert: What is the engine capacity there?

Mr. Thompson: Two thirty five hundred kilowatt.

Mr. Gilbert: The boiler capacity, what is that?

Mr. Thompson: The final will be eight thousand; the present is four thousand

Mr. Gilbert: Six boilers now provided.

Mr. Thompson: Four on the contract.

Mr. Gilbert: The drawings seem to indicate locations for eight.

Mr. Thompson: Well, we had to drop two boilers on account of the lack of money.

Mr. Gilbert: Now, leaving the power house for a moment. What is proposed to do with the heat that is generated there?

Mr. Thompson: It is proposed to take up and heat these seventeen buildings named in the Act.

Mr. Gilbert: How do you take it out?

Mr. Thompson: Carry it out through a duct system or high pressure steam pipes straight from the power plant at about one hundred pounds pressure, go out to each building and reduce the pressure in each building to the pressure they need there.

Mr. Gilbert: Use the exhaust steam?

Mr. Thompson: No, sir.

Mr. Gilbert: What do you do with that?

Mr. Thompson: We condense it and throw it back into the river.

Mr. Gilbert: What do you do with your condensation?

Mr. Thompson: Pump it back to the power house.

Mr. Gilbert: Where is your pumping plant?

Mr. Thompson: In each individual building.

Mr. Gilbert: For that circulation how would you install it in the ground?

Mr. Thompson: Tunnels.

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Mr. Gilbert: You have a storage battery plant there?

Mr. Gilbert: What would be the size of the tunnels?

Mr. Thompson: The tunnel is seven feet by six feet six inches. Seven wide, six feet six inches high.

Mr. Gilbert: Seven feet six inches high. Where does it cross the sewers?

Mr. Thompson: We cross the B street sewer in the Mall.

Mr. Gilbert: Do you go above or below the sewer?

Mr. Thompson: Above it.

Mr. Gilbert: You go through the top?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, with a high pressure steam pipe in a cast iron pipe.

Mr. Gilbert: Your tunnel is pretty near the level of the top of the sewer.

Mr. Thompson: We will take up about 15% of the area of the sewer.

Mr. Gilbert: How are you going to water-proof your tunnel?

Mr. Thompson: We are going to use a hydrated lime mixed in with concrete.

Mr. Gilbert: You propose to run over ~~the~~ to the Lincoln Memorial, don't you?

Mr. Thompson: If Congress authorized it. We cannot run there without authority.

We are asking Mr. Fitzgerald now to give us permission to take care of the Lincoln Memorial.

Mr. Gilbert: That would be below the water line all the way wouldn't it?

Mr. Thompson: I don't think so. Do you mean below the old flood water line?

Mr. Gilbert: Yes.

Mr. Thompson: I have been here for thirty years and I have never seen a flood up to that level. We would not carry the tunnel to the Lincoln Memorial. We would run a line out there in a terra cotta pipe about twelve inches in diameter.

Mr. Gilbert: Have you ever done that?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: I have done it but I had to take it all out again. What would be the expense of the terra cotta pipe on that account?

Mr. Thompson: That merely incloses the steel steam pipe. That would cover the steam pipe with a high grade installation of terra cotta construction, or concrete, if you will.

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Mr. Gilbert: That would be better. This method would cost about the same as the other.

260

Mr. Thompson: The expense of terra cotta pipe is negligible.

Mr. Gilbert: Of course you would have a great expansion in your pipe. What is proposed to do with this steam that you get to take into the buildings?

Mr. Thompson: Connect it to the present heating systems. The State, War and Navy Department have a hot water system in which exhaust steam from the engine is condensed in condensers and that is circulated with ~~pumps~~ pumps. We will go right in and displace the engines and take this low pressure ^{steam} in.

Mr. Gilbert: The State, War and Navy Department has a combination system. Are they old fashioned?

Mr. Thompson: They are old fashioned but excellent. Take the Treasury, that is a direct heating hot water system. It was put in by Bartlett and Hayward about thirty or forty years ago. Just as good as it ever was.

Mr. Gilbert: Well, you are proposing to use that same system of radiation in there with this steam supply?

Mr. Thompson: Well, we simply put a transformer in.

Mr. Gilbert: Heat your boiler with your live steam?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: Has an estimate been made of what saving it would make for the Government to abandon the local plants and utilize this proposed central system.

Mr. Thompson: Yes, sir, that is why we got the appropriation from Congress.

Mr. Gilbert: How much is proposed to be saved?

Mr. Thompson: Why, with this plant we will effect an actual saving of approximately two hundred and forty thousand dollars a year.

Mr. Gilbert: In what will that saving consist?

Mr. Thompson: Labor, coal, etc.

Mr. Gilbert. Against that saving, what expense account do you need? Is that a net saving?

Mr. Thompson: It is a net saving. One hundred and one thousand dollars is

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Mr. Gilbert: Well you have an account for operating there, salaries, and other accessories.

Mr. Thompson: We know to a nickel what it costs us to run it. About three hundred and seventy thousand dollars, roughly. Then we know what force we are going to put down in this station.

Mr. Gilbert: Have you given any consideration to the question of oil burning in this plant?

Mr. Thompson: Just in our report that we sent to Congress. When oil is cheaper of course we will take up the question; we cannot do that now.

Mr. Gilbert: Have you given any consideration to gas burning or producer gas?

Mr. Thompson: No, we haven't gone into anything like that, just oil and coal.

Mr. Gilbert: Well, aside from the power plant, you say there is an auxiliary? Suppose you put in producer gas plant and heated your buildings locally, wouldn't you save the cost of your tunnels?

Mr. Thompson: Why, yes, you could save the cost of the tunnels.

Mr. Gilbert: You would save the handling of coal and ashes?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: Now it is altogether a question of dollars and cents?

Mr. Thompson: Not altogether,--largely.

Mr. Blashfield: May I ask you what the total cost of the plant and necessary tunnels and transmission will be?

Mr. Thompson: Why the tunnels will run about one hundred and eighty eight thousand dollars.

Mr. Gilbert: How much is that a foot?

Mr. Thompson: It averages sixteen dollars a lineal foot. Your system of

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Mr. Gilbert: That includes the whole plant?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, sir.

Mr. Gilbert: Is it absolutely first-class work?

Mr. Thompson: That is my estimate; it is up to me to do it now. If I had the power to go before Congress and had the work to do over again I would not ask for another cent.

Mr. Gilbert: Are you pretty confident this water-proofing cement will be effective?

Mr. Thompson: I am pretty sure from my observation.

Mr. Gilbert: Suppose it didn't prove effective then what are you going to do?

Mr. Thompson: We will have to spend some of our reserve money to get up a ~~membrane~~ membrane system on it.

Mr. Gilbert: Well the membrane system is better than the other system in your judgment?

Mr. Thompson: Equal.

Mr. Gilbert: That is my judgment, I am glad you took it. Now we are trying to get what will be a permanent and absolutely first-class system. Don't you suppose it will be better to put in a first-class tunnel system to start if you are going to put in any?

Mr. Thompson: That is what we expect to do. As I say, I do not anticipate that more than five per cent of that tunnel will need any water-proofing at all. If we find there is a great big body of water and the tunnel leaks we will waterproof it with the hydrated lime proposition and put in a membrane installation.

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Thompson- just broadly as a citizen- do you think it is going to be an attractive feature for Washington to have four great stacks there to see from the Capitol, the White House, the Monument, Arlington, and all the rest of the city?

Mr. Thompson: I don't think it will be objectionable.

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Mr. Gilbert: Well, a kitchen or a water closet is necessary in a residential building, isn't it?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: Would you put them in the front parlor or on the entrance steps?

Mr. Thompson: No, I wouldn't put it there, but I would certainly have it.

It is the architects business to design it to look well.

Mr. Gilbert: Would you hold the architect responsible?

Mr. Thompson: No. In a power plant it strikes me that everybody looks for a stack

Mr. Gilbert: Well, you look for stacks on a power plant, but do you look for power plants in the center of an important city like Washington which Congress is spending millions to beautify? Answer just as a citizen?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: You would?

Mr. Thompson: Sure.

Mr. Gilbert: How high are the stacks, Mr. Thompson?

Mr. Thompson: From the ground about one hundred eighty eight feet. Ninety eight feet from the edge of the roof up. A good comparison, Mr. Gilbert, is the Potomac Electric Company's stack down there; it is about two hundred and twenty five feet high.

Mr. Gilbert: From the ground?

Mr. Thompson: From the ground.

Mr. Gilbert: What is the Potomac power plant?

Mr. Moore: Isn't that one of the reasons that Congress bought that to get rid of those stacks?

Mr. Simons: The Government hasn't bought the Potomac Electric power plant.

Mr. Thompson: Well, this thing is way down at the foot of Water street—

Mr. Gilbert: (interposing) Will these stacks emit black smoke?

Mr. Thompson: No, sir, If they do I will lose my job and so will the stoker man.

Mr. Gilbert: Will they emit gases?

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Mr. Gilbert: Well, a kitchen or a water closet is necessary in a residential

Mr. Thompson: Sure; they will be invisible gases.

Mr. Gilbert: How will that affect the Bureau of Printing and Engraving?

Mr. Thompson: It won't affect them at all. They have their own stacks there now

Mr. Gilbert: You have seventeen buildings to supply: Wouldn't that be seventeen times as much gas as coming from one building?

Mr. Thompson: You are burning thirty-three thousand tons of coal right along in those seventeen buildings. You are going down to this new building and burn about twenty-five thousand tons a year.

Mr. Gilbert: Which is the direction of the prevailing winds?

Mr. Thompson: I should say about Southeastward.

Mr. Gilbert: This site is just about south of the White House?

Mr. Thompson: Yes. This site was chosen because it was an ideal one from an engineering standpoint. It was chosen because it belonged to the United States government. It was all threshed out before Congress.

Mr. Gilbert: You say it was all threshed out. Who presented it?

Mr. Thompson: I did.

Mr. Gilbert: Has the full appropriation been made?

Mr. Thompson: No. One hundred and fifty thousand dollars was made immediately available, and in the deficiency bill six hundred thousand dollars was appropriated for continuation.

Mr. Gilbert: What committee of Congress did you go before?

Mr. Thompson: The appropriation, Fitzgerald.

Mr. Moore: Was the contract authorized in the appropriation?

Mr. Thompson: It was made mandatory upon the Secretary of the Treasury to write the contract. That is the way the legal department construed it. It was mandatory.

Colonel Harts: He is authorized to enter into the contract.

Mr. Gilbert: I would like to ask Mr. Thompson while I think of it --The

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Mr. Thompson: Yes. This site was chosen because it was an ideal one from an

Mr. Gilbert: This site is just about south of the White House?

Mr. Thompson: I should say about Southeastward.

Mr. Gilbert: Which is the direction of the prevailing winds?

twenty-five thousand tons a year.

in those seventeen buildings. You are going down to this new building and burn about

Mr. Thompson: You are burning thirty-three thousand tons of coal right along

times as much gas as coming from one building?

Mr. Gilbert: You have seventeen buildings to supply. Wouldn't that be seventeen

Mr. Thompson: It won't affect them at all. They have their own stacks there now

Mr. Gilbert: How will that affect the Bureau of Printing and Engraving?

Mr. Thompson: Sure; they will be invisible gases.

purpose of my inquiries, Mr. Thompson, is to see, first, if the plant must be at that location, can the stacks be limited; second, if the stacks cannot be limited, could the building be reduced in height, and third, is it essential that it should be placed at that location.

Now, what dimensions are specified and contracted for?

Mr. Thompson: Well, the boilers specified will be the Dow. V. Heine -- the specifications permit of several. It is up to the contractor to submit any one of these boilers for our own approval. Babcock and Wilcox and Heine and --

Mr. Gilbert: Wouldn't it be better to select a lower boiler?

Mr. Thompson: I don't think you could get anything lower than a Heine.

Mr. Gilbert: Wouldn't it be possible to have the boiler floor which is now nineteen feet above the ground at the lower level?

Mr. Thompson: All the engineers around here keep in mind the Johnstown flood, the point of highest water level. While I personally think it will never happen again, it was thought to be good judgment to have the operating room three or four feet above that level, so if it came back to the Johnstown flood level, it might be a couple feet or more, why you could still run and not stall your machinery. It is purely a question of good judgment. That guided Mr. Hanna over here in the Capital Traction power plant. He followed the same scheme. He has his operating room level about four feet above the Johnstown flood level.

Mr. Gilbert: Well, if you had such a flood it would stop your heating apparatus at once.

Mr. Thompson: Well, we would shoot the steam through--

Mr. Gilbert: Well, the man-holes.

Mr. Thompson: We would have an awful time.

Mr. Gilbert: It is proposed to use the water from the river for condensation in the turbines?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Gilbert: Suppose you were located -- just for a minute leave out of our

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Mr. Gilbert: Suppose you were located -- just for a minute leave out of our

minds the connection for steam lines and confine ourselves to the lighting plant only. If you were ~~ix~~ located on another railroad at another point in Washington where you can get good water supply, even if you had to build a small reservoir or tank of say 40 x 50 feet, 7 or 8 feet deep, you would have sufficient water circulation.

Mr. Thompson: You would have to put in a cooling tower -- If you could find a point for this power plant on government property where you could get coal with equal ease, the same amount of condensing water and still keep within a reasonable distance of your farthest building, you don't want to get too far away. But for steam you want to stay along about twelve thousand feet from your power plant and from an engineering standpoint if you had these same conditions and kept that radius it would not make any difference where we put it. But after searching the ground here pretty carefully that was the first thing I had to decide.

Mr. Gilbert: Have any members of this commission visited the site?

Mr. Olmsted: Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Gilbert: You know where it is?

Mr. Hastings: I would like to see the site.

Mr. Olmsted: How high are the stacks?

Mr. Thompson: Well, from the ground about one hundred and eighty eight feet; ninety feet from ~~the~~ the roof. The stacks are sixteen feet in diameter from the base to the level of the roof.

Mr. Olmsted: They will dominate everything wherever you put them.

Colonel Harts: They are nearly half as high as the Washington Monument.

Mr. Hastings: About what would we loose in the running of the plant if we were to use oil?

Mr. Thompson: You are saving nearly three hundred thousand dollars a year.

Mr. Gilbert: Based on coal?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Hastings: How much would you save in using oil instead of coal? What is the difference between the saving using coal and the saving using oil?

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minds the connection for steam lines and confine ourselves to the lighting plant

Mr. Thompson: I think we will burn not over thirty five thousand tons. Three barrels of oil are equal to a ton of coal. That will be ninety thousand barrels of oil. I should say roughly now at the present price of crude oil it will run pretty close to two dollars a barrel; that will be one hundred and eighty thousand against we will say three dollars a ton for coal, ninety thousand. That will be a saving of ninety thousand dollars.

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Cammerer, can't you get into communication with the Standard Oil Company and find out the price of oil a barrel?

Mr. Hastings: That ninety thousand dollars is paid out of the government's pocket merely for burning oil.

Mr. Thompson: I feel quite sure it will be as much as that. We handle nine hundred and fifty buildings scattered all over the country and we burn coal, oil, and lignite, and we know what it costs. We burn oil in Frisco and all up and down the coast.

Mr. Hastings: And it makes a difference of ninety thousand dollars?

Mr. Thompson: Three barrels of crude oil is equal to a ton of coal.—

Mr. Hastings: Oil is fifty per cent higher than it was a year ago.

Mr. Thompson: One hundred per cent, I believe.

Mr. Hastings: You think so? Do you consider it to be of the moment because of the Mexican war?

Mr. Thompson: Why the Mexican trouble has little to do with it. The Mexican Petroleum Company, an English company down there, could cut the price of crude oil down pretty reasonably if they wanted to.

Colonel Harts: The oil is three dollars and fifty cents; not by tank cars; barrel rates.

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Thompson, if possible, we would like to see the stacks cut down.

Mr. Thompson: I would rather see no stacks than stacks, but it did not come to us in that way. It came to us as a question that there would be stacks.

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Mr. Gilbert: Was this an original proposition from your office to Congress and then back to you in a mandatory form?

Mr. Thompson: We presented the matter to Congress. We went to Congress and outlined the scheme, showed the saving, and they granted us a million and a half dollar appropriation.

Mr. Gilbert: Why not attach the plant to Mr. Wood's plant?

Mr. Thompson: It would be an objectionable thing from an engineering standpoint, on account of the distance. We don't want to pull steam from capitol hill way down to the State, War and Navy Department building. We have got a limit in the steam.

Mr. Gilbert: How do they send it in New York?

Mr. Thompson: New York is a live steam proposition.

Mr. Gilbert: This would be a live steam proposition?

Mr. Thompson: I don't care to run exhaust steam more than a mile, high pressure steam two miles and a half.

Mr. Gilbert: Wouldn't you save something by heating your nearby buildings with exhaust steam?

Mr. Thompson: If this was a great big generating plant generating a hundred thousand kilowatts and the heating was a by-product, why there would a saving in doing so.

Mr. Gilbert: What do you expect your current would cost you?

Mr. Thompson: Well, we are going to put out a kilowatt hour at six tenths of a cent and we are going to sell it to these various buildings for about one cent. With that money we expect to establish a sinking fund. We are paying the Potomac Electric Power Company now on an average of three cents for current.

Mr. Gilbert: How far do you send the steam?

Mr. Thompson: We will send the high pressure steam about nine thousand feet which is well within the economical radius for high pressure steam. It is twice as far as I would care to send exhaust steam. The ideal location would be pretty close to the Potomac Electric Power House on B street; you have the railroad facilities there for getting your coal in cheaply; getting your ashes away; it is about the center of gravity of the load.

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Mr. Gilbert: Suppose you were to spend a million and a half dollars by having 369 in the different buildings an individual plant. Suppose you modernize each individual plant.

Mr. Hastings: By spending a million and a half by bringing each one up to date instead of saving the Government one hundred and seventy five thousand dollars you would be saving the Government two hundred thousand dollars.

Mr. Gilbert: Since there will be no smoke why not put the plant at the center of the Mall and use the Washington Monument to discharge the gases? (Laughter)

Mr. Hastings: It is a good idea.

Mr. Gilbert: What is the cost or estimated cost of running this plant under forced draft?

Mr. Thompson: I should say the forced draft apparatus over the four stacks would be ten to twelve thousand dollars.

Mr. Hastings: If each building had an individual plant you would save that one hundred thousand dollars a year? You would not need to make any allowance for the deterioration.

Mr. Thompson: Yes, you would. The depreciation charges would go on the individual plant just like it would on a consolidated.

Mr. Hastings: That is true, but you would not have to keep your individual plant going.

Mr. Thompson. You would not get away with that in the Government.

Mr. Gilbert: What would it cost to scrap this machinery?

Colonel Harts: I can tell you right now we won't scrap anything in the State, War and Navy building; not as long as I have anything to do with it.

Mr. Thompson: That is the present idea.

Colonel Harts: Yes, the present idea.

Mr. Gilbert: It is fortunate that every city this size does not have to have a central plant. Suppose, Hastings, you were called upon to locate a plant of this kind near Central Park, what would you suppose would be the row in New York?

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Mr. Hastings: Oh, it could not be done.

Mr. Gilbert: -- or Forest Park in St. Louis?

Mr. Hastings: There would be such a cry against it they would say: "We will do without heat."

Mr. Thompson: What about the 21st street station in New York and the Edison station on the river?

Mr. Anderson: Those things are pioneer; they go ahead of city development.

Mr. Thompson: In the West one whole city is served with--

Mr. Moore: Oh, no, we have got as good a heating system in Detroit as you have anywhere but it is only a drop in the bucket.

Mr. Anderson: Has the question been considered of the possibility of another location. Is there another possible location?

Mr. Thompson.: Mr. Anderson, it is under contract and they are digging the hole.

Mr. Anderson: That means that we are wasting our time discussing it? The point is that ~~xxxxx~~ it is too late for us to discuss it?

Mr. Thompson: No, I wouldn't say that --

Colonel Harts: You remember when the plans were approved?

Mr. Simons: No, I do not.

Colonel Harts: You remember, Mr. Thompson, when they were approved?

Mr. Thompson: Just about a year ago.

Mr. Gilbert: Are there any other questions you would like to ask?

Mr. Anderson: I would first like to ask is there any other location?

Mr. Thompson: Not to my mind; a thorough search has been made and we cannot find it.

Mr. Anderson: Further up the river gets you further away from the city doesn't it?

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mr. Anderson: Do you depend upon water very much?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, we must be near water.

Mr. Gilbert: Well, if there are no other questions we will adjourn.

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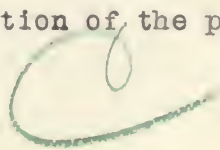
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January 31, 1916.

Sir:

Immediately upon receipt of your letter of January 14th transmitting the plans for the proposed central heating, lighting and power plant, by direction of the Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts the subject was referred to a committee for preliminary consideration and report; and a special meeting of the Commission was called for January 26th at which the report of the committee was received and further consideration was given by the full membership of the Commission. At this meeting were present representatives of the Supervising Architect's Office of the Treasury who answered inquiries concerning the plant.

The plans submitted indicate a structure, the exterior dimensions of which are 178' 8" long by 126' 6" wide, and having a height of from 80 to 90 feet above the level of the river, upon which are four large chimney stacks each about 16 feet in diameter, and stated to be 188 feet in height above the ground or about 195 feet above the river. A structure of this size and character would obviously be conspicuous wherever located in the city: From the Capitol, from the White House, from Arlington, from the Mall, from the War College and the water approach to Washington, from the Lincoln Memorial, from East and West Potomac Parks which are now being developed, and from many other prominent points in the city the proposed plant will be a ~~very~~ disagreeably conspicuous object in the landscape. Its close proximity to the Washington monument will seriously affect the simple dignity of that structure, and its great bulk and huge stacks will cause a deplorable change in the entire aspect of that section of the city. Furthermore, as the location of the Lincoln Memorial by Congress in Potomac Park leaves the southern terminus of the vista from the White House southwardly toward the river the most important site for a memorial structure left in the national capital, this site would lose much of its effect and dignity by the construction of the plant as proposed.



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It is understood that prevailing winds in Washington are from the south and the southeast. This being so, smoke or gases arising from the plant would be distributed over the areas upon which are located the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Smithsonian Institution, the new National Museum, the buildings of the Department of Agriculture, the White House propagating gardens and conservatories, and the tree growths of the Mall and other valuable properties upon which the Government has expended great care and vast sums of money.

The Commission strongly disapprove of the plans for this structure as submitted, and view with grave anxiety the location of any such plant on this site.

By direction of the Commission:

Respectfully,

Wm. W. Harts.
Colonel, U. S. Army,

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Mr. W. Harte.
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The Secretary of the Treasury.

January 31, 1916.

Sirs:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at their meeting held last Wednesday, gave careful consideration to your letter of December 14th last requesting their advice as to what change, if any, should be made in the system of lighting the Piney Branch Bridge, and studied the photographs and sketches submitted therewith.

In the opinion of the Commission the arch of the bridge, the locations and size of the original lamp posts, and the size and elevation of the tigers at the ends of the bridge and their location with reference to the original lamp posts all bore a harmonious relation which evidently had been worked out with considerable care and skill by the designers; and the Commission feel that the replacement of the original posts by others of different design would disturb the appearance of the structure. They would, therefore, like to suggest that the original lights be restored if the practical question of globe breakage can be solved. The new octagonal design submitted does not seem to fit the requirements of the place so well as the old standard.

In a letter to the Commission dated April 7, 1914, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia stated that they were considering the question of replacing the original lamp posts on the parapets of this bridge with other posts because of the excessive amount of breakage in the globes. In their reply, copy of which is enclosed for your information, the Commission made a suggestion which, in particular, they felt would be found satisfactory in reducing the breakage of globes in the original posts, namely, that a type of globe might be designed in which separate segments only would be likely to be broken and which could be replaced with little expense, thereby lessening the amount of damage by breakage.

By direction of the Commission:

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Wm. W. Harts
Colonel, U.S. Army,

Secretary and Executive Officer

The Board of Commissioners
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Enclosure.

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By direction of the Commission:

Respectfully,

Wm. W. Harris
Colonel, U.S. Army.

Secretary and Executive Officer

The Board of Commissioners
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Washington, D. C.

Enclosure.

Washington, D. C.,

May 9, 1916.

Sirs:

The Commission of Fine Arts fully recognizes the unfortunate character of certain results in the application of the present law regulating the heights of buildings in the District of Columbia to which you have called attention in your communication of January 11, 1916, and which have led you to the conclusion that there exists some necessity for a change in the existing law.

Those results appear to arise from two causes. The first is the arbitrary and mechanical method of determining the line of demarcation between property governed by the high limitation applicable to "business streets" and property on which the limit is set thirty feet lower by classification as on "residential streets". The second is that the limits as fixed in the law for either classification are defined so as to permit buildings which are, in certain situations, distinctly too high for the best interests of their neighborhoods and of the city as a whole, and so as to invite the construction of buildings having a peculiarly ugly and disorderly skyline formed of tanks, sheds, and other excrescences wholly unrelated in appearance to the facades which they surmount.

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Washington, D. C.

May 3, 1916.

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Those results appear to arise from two causes. The first is the arbitrary and mechanical method of determining the line of demarcation between property governed by the high limitation applicable to "business streets" and property on which the limit is set fifty feet lower by classification as on "residential streets". The second is that the limits as fixed in the law for either classification are defined so as to permit buildings which are, in certain situations, distinctly too high for the best interests of their neighborhoods and of the city as a whole, and so as to invite the construction of buildings having a peculiarly and disorderly skyline formed of towers, sheds, and other excrescences wholly unrelated in appearance to the facades which they adjoin.

It is clearly unfortunate that the law prescribed in all cases where a "residential street" intersects a "business street" that the higher

limitation shall govern the corner lots. There are instances where important avenues of distinctly residential character throughout are crossed by relatively unimportant streets on which there are liable to be enough business establishments to permit their classification as "business streets", and under the present law the permissible height of building along the residential street must jump into the air whenever it comes to a lot having a side frontage on such a cross street.

Again it is a very unfortunate fact that the Commissioners are required without discretion to apply the higher limitation whenever in three or more consecutive blocks a majority of the frontage on a street is used for any other than residential purposes, as defined in a somewhat technical legal manner. The result of such technicalities is that the city is likely to become in constantly increasing measure a curious and disorderly patchwork of two classes of property on one of which buildings may be erected from ~~thirty~~ to forty-five feet higher than on the other.

The Commission of Fine Arts would therefore strongly recommend the modification of the present unsatisfactory method of determining the boundaries between these two classes of property. A better method would appear to be that followed in Boston, where the law provides for the establishment of "District A" in which the maximum height is 125 feet, and "District B" in which it is 80 feet (with further limitations in each, depending on street width and other factors); and places the duty of determining the boundaries of the two districts upon a commission, with provisions for hearing and appeal, the determination of the commission fixing the boundaries for a period of fifteen years. If the District Commissioners

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were charged by Congress with performing this function in Washington and were given discretionary power to take all factors into account when fixing the boundaries of the several districts, there is no question that they would arrive at a far more orderly and more satisfactory classification than could ever result from the mechanical application of the present law with its division of the city into so-called "business streets" and "residential streets".

II. In discussing the precise limits of height applicable to buildings in the several districts of the city, the first point to be emphasized is that such limitations must be justified on economic grounds and broad grounds of social welfare. It would be wholly without justification to establish such building-height regulations for the purpose of making private builders conform to an arbitrary preference for the appearance presented by buildings of any given height. If the advice of the Commission of Fine Arts is of any special value in the matter it is not primarily because a question of taste is involved but because some of the members of the Commission have had occasion professionally to study the problem of building heights from the economic point of view, balancing the advantages of each possible variation against the costs.

Effective height regulation in American cities is so new and so limited as to have given us little weight of precedent as to the sort of limitation to adopt, but a great deal of practical experience as to the advantages and disadvantages of building to a great variety of heights and in a great variety of manners. European cities offer us the nearly universal precedent of height limitations so rigid and, from the American standpoint, so drastic that the dangers against which they are intended to guard would remain largely theoretical if it were not for the unlimited experimenting

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with high buildings in this country.

The heights permissible under the present law in Washington in the two principal districts are slightly higher than in the somewhat corresponding districts in Boston, even without regard to the peculiar clause which permits buildings on a certain part of the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue to exceed the general limit by thirty feet more. In European capitals the highest limit in any part of the city is often lower than in the "residential" district here, and it is frequently the case that much lower limitations prevail in other parts of those cities.

Certainly in a region devoted mainly to private residences for single families the existing law offers little protection toward the maintenance of the high standards of light and airiness and general attractiveness established by those who have invested in these houses, since this law permits the erection in any such residential neighborhood of a block-like building rising not less than seven stories sheer from the lot line and surmounted by a disorderly collection of sheds and tanks rising to an indefinite and irregular height above the main roof.

If there is to be any differentiation in respect to building height limitations there is even stronger ground for distinguishing "elevator apartment houses" and other buildings of about seven stories in height from the great class of dwellings which are naturally limited by the absence of elevators to three or four or five stories than there is for distinguishing seven-story elevator buildings from those of eight or ten stories and upward.

We believe, therefore, that there should be provision in the law for districts in which buildings would not be permitted to exceed the height which is normal for dwellings unprovided with elevators. The Commission cannot attempt to define this height precisely. It ought to be fixed only after the most thorough examination of the

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facts and tendencies of real estate development in Washington, because the purpose of any such differentiated height limitations should be, as before stated, not to impose arbitrary and theoretical restrictions upon property owners, but to recognize the existing economic and social facts and tendencies and to safeguard for each district the opportunity of developing in whatever way seems likely to bring the highest economic and social values which are practically attainable.

It is clear, however, that in defining the height limitation, for the district of highest buildings as well as for that of the lowest, there should be a marked change from the form of statement used in the present law. The present method is, in effect, to fix a horizontal plane extending, at a certain elevation dependent upon the width of the abutting streets and their grades, over the entire lot from front to back and from side to side, as a limitation upon the height of the main walls and main roof, and then to permit excrescences to rise above any part of the block so defined provided those excrescences are not used for habitation. This method of definition is illogical in its failure to recognize that a building may rise to a greater height in the middle portion of a lot than at the edges without cutting off appreciably more light and air from the streets or from neighboring buildings; and incidentally it is a positive invitation, as previously indicated, to the erection of buildings having the ugliest and most disorderly sky line that can well be conceived. The Commission believe that the best form of definition would be one which (a) fixes the permissible height of building along the street line - and along the rear lot line or any other line where limitation of height is necessary and proper for safeguarding the ad-

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mission of light and air to adjoining land -; (b) permits an increasing height at increasing distances back from the line, with opportunity for utilizing to its full economic value all of the space into which the building is allowed to project; and (c) gives discretion to the proper administrative authority to permit the projection beyond the general limit only of chimneys and such other closely restricted objects as will distinctly contribute to the appearance of the building without materially reducing the access of light or air to adjoining lands.

The best-known example of a carefully drawn definition of building height limitations along the above lines is that which has been in force for many years in Paris. The same principles, differently applied, are to be found in whole or in part in the regulations governing building heights in many European countries. In part they are illustrated in the proposals of the Commission on Buildings Districts and Restrictions of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment of New York City, summarized on pages 11 and 13 of the report of March 10, 1916, and stated in full on pages 25 to 31 of that report.

To sum up: In the opinion of the Commission of Fine Arts Congress should be urged (1) to amend the present law immediately by giving to the District Commissioners or other suitable administrative authority discretionary power to fix the location of the boundaries between districts to which the regulations now applicable to so-called "business streets" shall apply and those to which the regulations now applicable to so-called "residential streets" shall apply; and (2) to provide for the drafting of a much more complete, logical, and thorough-going law than the present one, based upon a careful investigation of the present and prospective economic conditions of Washington real estate as a whole, of the general standards of human welfare reasonably to be enforced in Washington, and of the best practice

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elsewhere.

The Commission of Fine Arts will be glad further to cooperate with the Commissioners of the District of Columbia in this, or any other, matter which is of such great importance in the harmonious development of the National Capital.

By direction of the Commission:

Respectfully,

WM. W. HARTS,

Colonel, U. S. Army,

Secretary and Executive Officer.

The Board of Commissioners
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January 31, 1916.

251

My dear Sir:

The Commission of Fine Arts was glad to have had the opportunity of an informal conference with your sub-committee last Wednesday with reference to a site and design for the proposed memorial in Washington to Francis Asbury, while the design for the proposed memorial to him is still in the early stages of development.

As was suggested in the conference, the Commission would urge that, before developing the equestrian statue idea, a serious attempt be made to find a solution of the problem which is satisfactory to your committee, and at the same time be more removed from the portrait idea. This is suggested without any reflection on the preliminary design presented, or on the ability of the artists who made it, - quite the contrary. It is simply that the Commission feels some other types of monuments offer far greater artistic possibilities and are equally fitting as memorials. The Commission is seriously concerned at the large number of monuments and memorials of the portrait type offered to ~~xxx~~ the city, and there is a strong feeling that they should not be encouraged.

The Commission also appreciates the breadth of view your Committee have shown in not seeking to place the memorial in a more congested section of the city.

By direction of the Commission:

Respectfully,

Wm.W.Harts
Colonel, U.S.Army,

Secretary and Executive Officer.

Earl Cranston, Esq.,
Chairman, Executive Committee of the
Francis Asbury Memorial Association,
1811 Irving street, Washington, D.C.

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189

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Secretary and Executive Officer.

Earl Cranston, Esq.,
Chairman, Executive Committee of the
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1811 Irving Street, Washington, D.C.

January 27, 1916.

Dear Mr. Riggs:

The studies - sketches and model - which you submitted to the Commission at their meeting yesterday were considered by them a great improvement over former studies considered.

A number of suggestions made by the Commission were fully discussed with you and the architects and the sculptor, and, it is understood, were agreeable to you. The Commission felt that the sketch design for the proposed entrance treatment required considerable further study, pointing out in particular that the elements of the design were not sufficient to support posts of that height. With reference to the model, they suggested consideration of the omission of the ornamental band (of wreaths) on the enveloping wall, - of the desirability of a study of the reduction of the height of the end piers to see whether it might not be considered better to have them brought down to the same height as the wall, - that the scale of the end figures should be a little smaller, or that of the figure of Buchanan larger, to differentiate between them somewhat more, - studying the proportion of the panel back of the central figure at a height of twice its width so as to get more classic form, - and the desirability of omitting the break in the frieze above the pilasters and the break in the parapet.

The Commission asked me to assure you of their appreciation of your continued courtesy and cooperation in this matter.

Very truly, yours,

Wm. W. Harts.
Colonel, U. S. Army,

Secretary and Executive Officer.

Lawrason Riggs, Esq.,
Equitable Building,
Baltimore, Maryland.

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